

The remaining indicators are organized according to the Comprehensive Plan's four core values:

- Community
- Economic Opportunity and Security
- Social Equity, and
- Environmental Stewardship.

These indicators are intended to track how well those four values are being achieved under the Comprehensive Plan. They are not necessarily tied to specific goals in the Comprehensive Plan but are intended to be broad indicators of how well the city is meeting its goals under the Comprehensive Plan.

## ***2. Community indicators***

Community, as discussed in the Comprehensive Plan, means the connections among people within the city and within the region. Neighborhoods share one type of community. The city as a whole has another sense of community, and the neighborhoods and the city participate in a regional community.

As a community, we have a responsibility to ourselves, to our children, and to our neighbors in the regions outside Seattle. "Community" means our sense of that shared responsibility. The indicators in this section help measure how we are living up to our responsibilities.

The indicators that measure community are:

- People who volunteer in community activities
- Open space
- Crime
- Feeling safe in the neighborhoods
- Home ownership rate
- Number of households with children

Indicators of community are showing mixed results in meeting the city's goals. While crime is down in Seattle and residents are feeling safer, fewer households own their own home, and the number of households with children has fallen. The city has been able to match population and housing growth with increases in parks and open space, and there appears to be little change in the rates at which residents are volunteering.

## **Volunteering: 43% of Seattle adults regularly volunteer their time. Almost 30% of these citizens volunteered more than 10 hours a week.**

This information comes from a citywide residential survey in 2001. A similar survey in 1996 indicated that approximately 42% of Seattle residents regularly volunteered for community-benefiting activities. Of those who volunteered, nearly half volunteered more than 10 hours a week. While the portion of city residents volunteering has stayed approximately the same, residents are volunteering fewer hours.

Small businesses have an even higher rate of participation. Three out of four small businesses responding to a 2002 citywide business survey reported that they participate in community service activities.

This indicator measures one way that Seattle residents express their commitment to the community. Volunteering can take many forms: coaching children's sports teams, driving elderly people to medical appointments, serving on the board of a non-profit organization, planting street trees, being a block watch captain, collecting door-to-door for charitable campaigns, or working on the implementation of a neighborhood plan.

Goal HDG1 of the Comprehensive Plan's Human Development element calls for "Mak[ing] Seattle a place where people are involved in community and neighborhood life; where they help each other and contribute to the vitality of the city." Policy HD2 calls for promoting volunteerism and community service.

By participating in civic and community processes, including neighborhood plan implementation, Seattle citizens understand that they can make a difference. Participating in community development is a way of taking responsibility for the larger community and understanding that individuals have the power to change the community for the better.

Seattle provides a number of different programs and opportunities for residents to get involved and participate in City government and neighborhood facilities. Many City departments, including the Parks Department and Seattle Public Library have volunteer programs that citizens can access by contacting those departments. In addition, a number of non-profit organizations can connect volunteers to programs needing their assistance.

## **Open space: 461 acres of new open space since 1994**

Since September 1994, the City has acquired 461 acres of open space for parks, community gardens and green spaces. In addition, the city currently has 12 acres of community gardens or P-patches, including 10 gardens that have opened since 1994.

The Comprehensive Plan Land Use and Capital Facilities elements provide goals for open space in Seattle. The citywide goal is 1 acre of “breathing room” open space for every 100 citizens. Breathing-room open space includes open spaces that are permanently set aside as open whether or not they are accessible for public use. For example, breathing room would include a steep wooded hillside protected for natural habitat, even if it were not accessible for recreation. Some open spaces owned by other public agencies, such as the Port of Seattle were also counted toward this goal. Since 1994, the amount of “breathing room” space per resident has increased in Seattle. This inventory does not include schoolyards or university campuses, which may also provide important community open spaces.

In addition to the goals for breathing room open space, the Comprehensive Plan has goals to provide: 1) at least one acre of usable open space for every 1,000 households within urban villages and 2) open space within an eighth to a quarter of a mile of residents in urban villages.

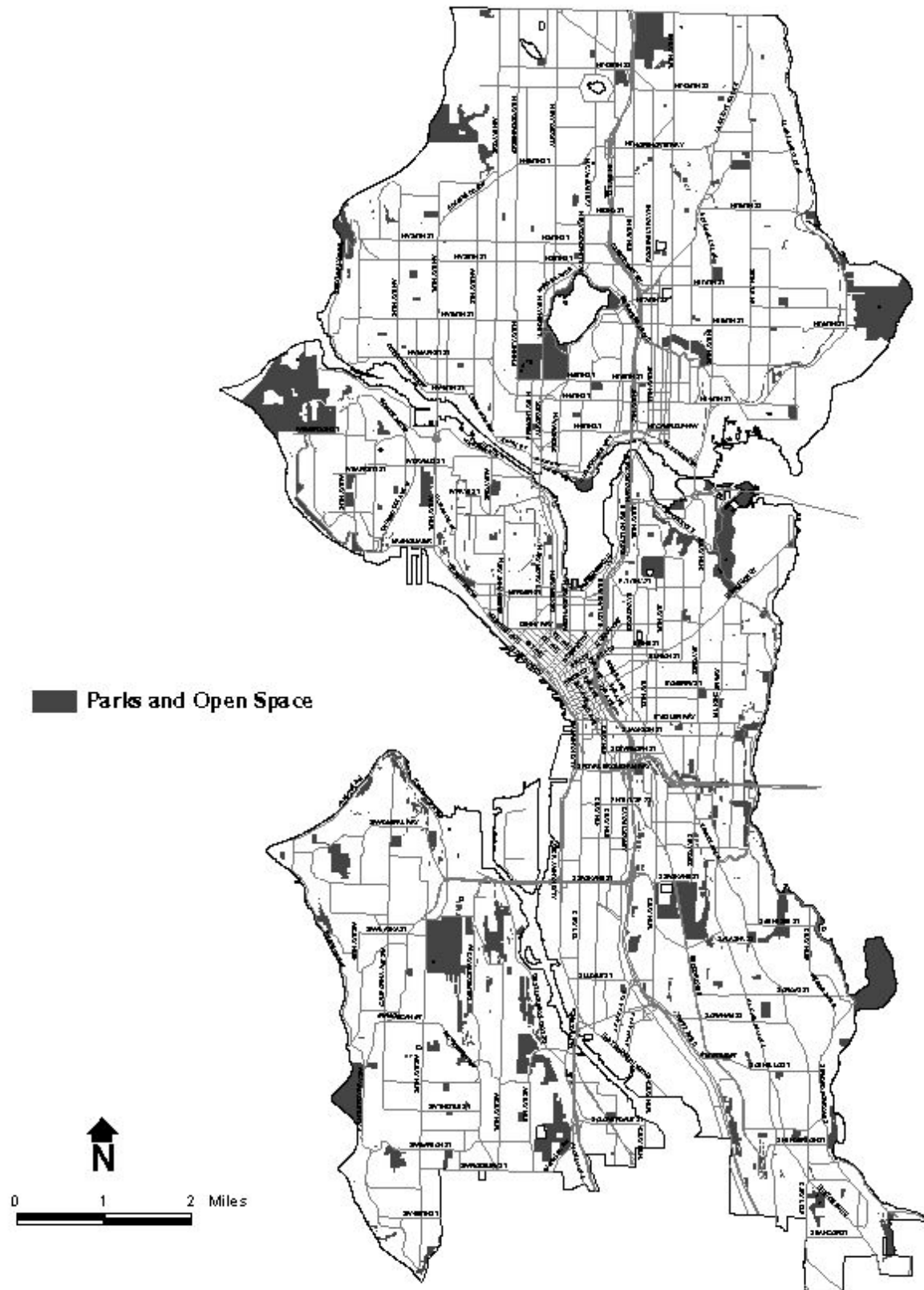
Most of the thirty-eight urban villages contain gaps in terms of residents' proximity to usable open space. The severity of gaps in urban village usable open space varies. Usable open space is available in most of the Crown Hill, Green Lake and Upper Queen Anne villages. On the other hand, almost all of the Northgate, University, Ballard, Denny Triangle, 12th Avenue, and West Seattle Junction villages have significant deficiencies in residents' access to usable open space.

Open space may be used for recreation, wildlife habitat, growing food, or simply as a place for quiet contemplation. Many citizens also consider open space a cultural resource. The Cultural Resource Element to the Comprehensive Plan includes Policy CR4:

“Continue Seattle’s long tradition of providing a rich variety of public open spaces, community gardens, and public facilities; to provide residents with recreational and cultural opportunities, promote environmental stewardship and attract desirable economic development.”

In November 2000, Seattle residents voted to create new parks and open spaces through the Pro-Parks levy. The levy is funding the acquisition, development, stewardship, maintenance and programming of new and existing parks. Pro-parks included \$26 million for park acquisition and over \$100 million for the development of parks and open space, including turning some underutilized City-owned properties into park space.

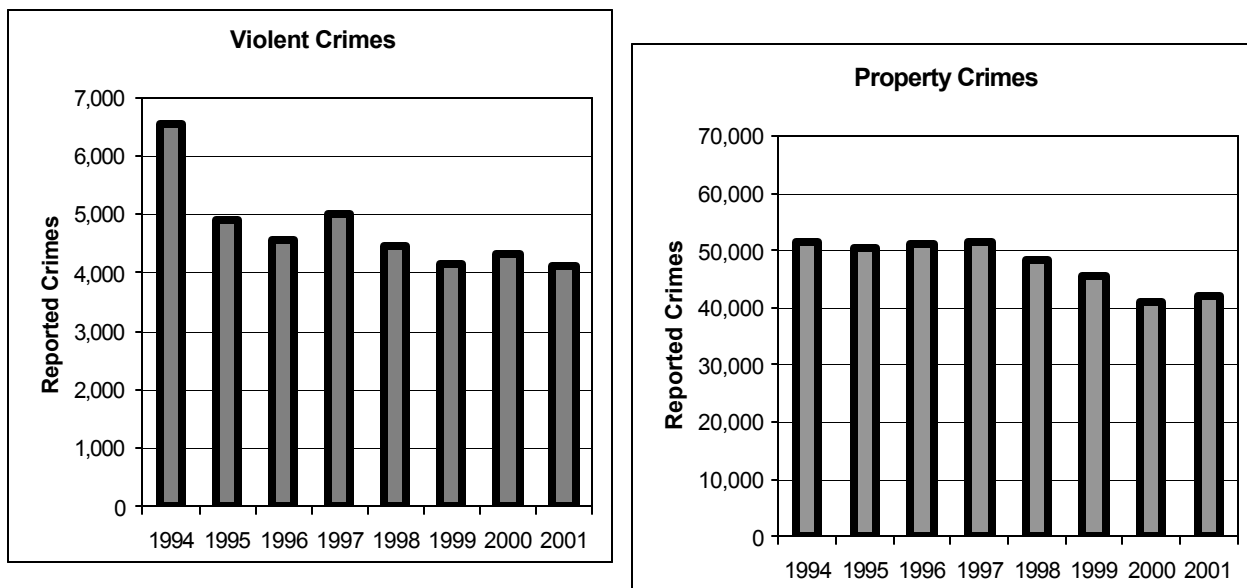
## City of Seattle Parks and Open Space



## Crime: Both property and personal crime have decreased.

The number of violent crimes in Seattle has fallen by 37% since 1994 from 6,500 assaults, robberies, rapes and murders that year to 4,100 in 2001. The number of property crimes has fallen from 51,000 thefts, burglaries and auto thefts in 1994 to 42,000 in 2001. This was an 18% drop in the annual number of property crimes.

Only one category of crime has increased since 1994. Auto theft has increased in Seattle from 6,400 thefts a year to 8,755 in 2001. The number of murders in Seattle fell by 64% between 1994 and 2001.



The decrease in the crime rate suggests that the quality of public safety is improving in Seattle, even as the city's population continues to increase.

Goal HDG7 of the Comprehensive Plan's Human Development Element is to "Strive to reduce violence and fear of crime."

In addition to the important work that police officers do, other City programs focus on reducing the number of crimes in Seattle. Among those programs are Neighborhood Action Team Seattle (NATS), an inter-departmental/interagency team whose purpose is to work with neighborhoods to address persistent problems affecting public safety and livability.

## Feeling Safe in the Neighborhoods: Residents are feeling safer in Seattle.

Percentage of respondents feeling very safe or somewhat safe in Seattle

Year	Outside Downtown		Downtown	
	During the Day	After Dark	During the Day	After Dark
1996	not asked	74%	90%	41%
1997	97%	75%	92%	47%
1999	97%	74%	94%	54%
2001	97%	75%	96%	58%

Percentage of respondents who feel that crime is not a major problem in Seattle

Year	Violent Crime not a major problem	Property Crime not a major problem
1996	89%	85%
1997	93%	89%
1999	92%	86%
2001	92%	87%

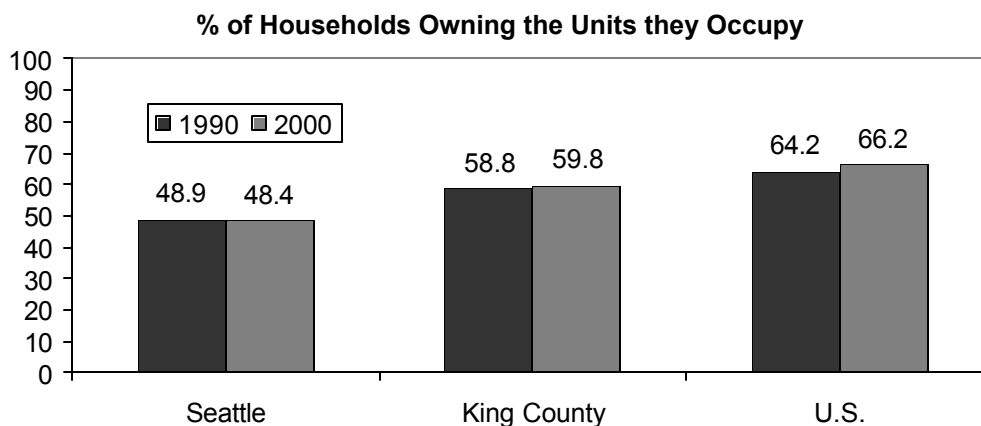
In a separate survey, fifteen percent of Seattle's small businesses in 2002 said that crime is a major problem in Seattle. Nineteen percent of small businesses felt that public safety after dark was a major problem. Only four percent of small businesses felt that public safety was a major problem during daylight hours.

This indicator measures how safe people feel in their neighborhoods and downtown, during the daytime and after dark. It also reports whether people feel that violent and property crimes are major problems for them.

The Comprehensive Plan's Human Development Element, Goal G9, is to "Strive to reduce violence and fear of crime." The fear of a crime is sometimes different from the actual amount and type of crime occurring. The perception can be very powerful, however, and people will act on their perceptions possibly avoiding a neighborhood by not shopping, living, or doing business there.

Opportunities to meet neighbors and community members can help people feel more comfortable and less afraid in their community. The City helps to support a number of different forums for people to meet their neighbors, from Block Watch programs to community clean-up activities to neighborhood street tree planting programs. The Comprehensive Plan's urban village strategy that encourages the development of mixed-use neighborhoods has the effect of putting more pedestrians and more "eyes" on the street and increasing the feeling of safety.

## Home ownership rate: Home ownership in Seattle declined slightly



**in the 1990s.**

Source: U.S. Census

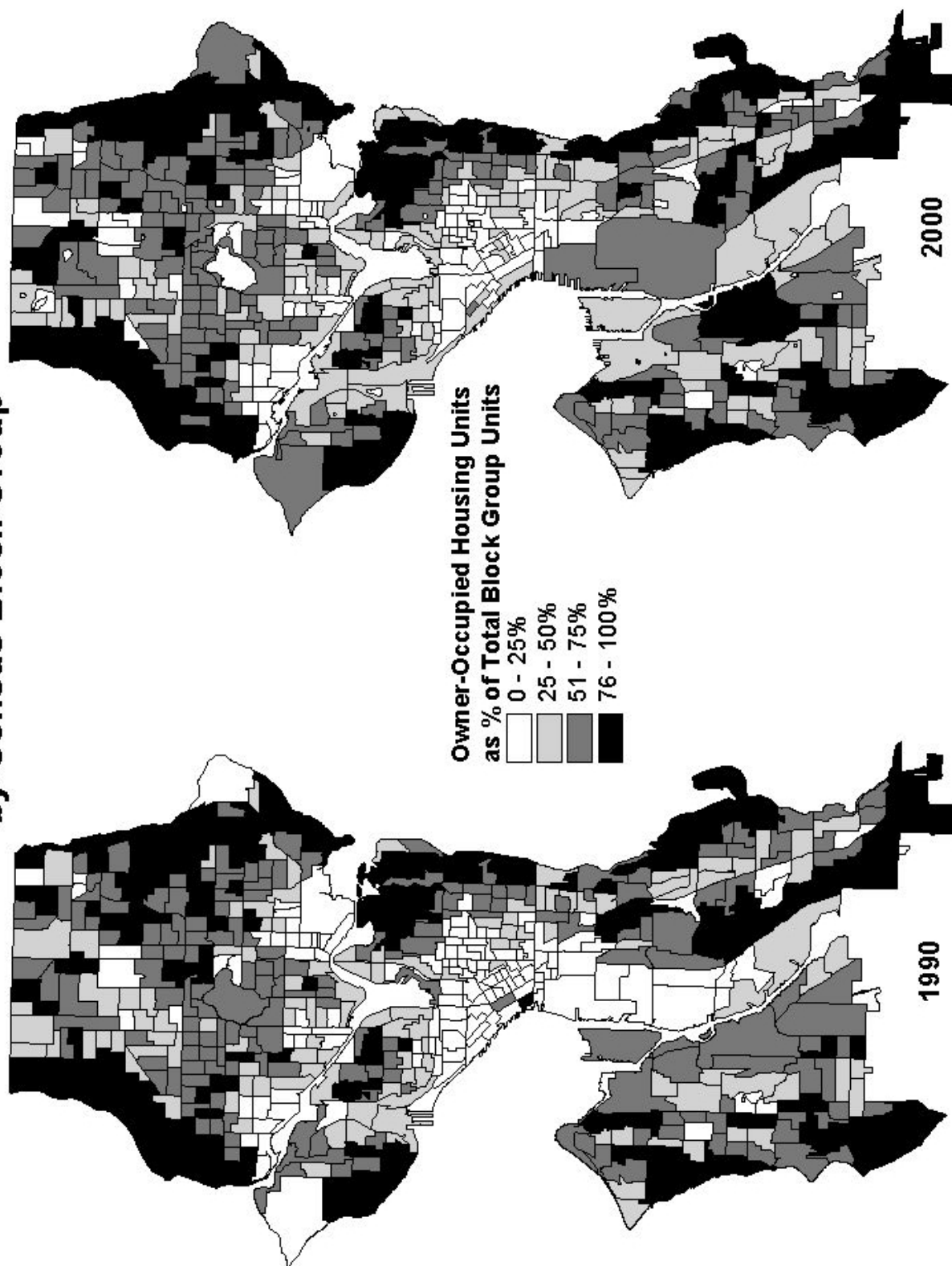
The 2000 census reported that 48.4% of Seattle households own their own home (single-family homes, townhouses and condominiums). This is significantly lower than the King County or United States rate of home ownership. One reason for a lower home ownership rate in Seattle may be the significantly higher portion of Seattle's housing stock that is in multifamily buildings, as opposed to single-family structures. Multifamily buildings are more likely to be available for rent than are single-family houses.

For this reason, the home ownership rate in urban villages is lower than the home ownership rate in some single-family areas outside of the urban village boundaries. Urban villages were generally designated in the commercial and multifamily hearts of neighborhoods.

The Comprehensive Plan's Housing Element Goal G8 is to "Achieve a rate of owner-occupancy of housing no less than the county average owner-occupancy rate." The Plan promotes home ownership in order to foster a sense of community, encourage investment in housing, and minimize displacement of low-income residents due to gentrification of neighborhoods. The City also has an interest in safeguarding the condition and quality of the housing stock and in maintaining attractive and livable neighborhoods.

The City has limited powers to affect the owner occupancy rate. The choice to buy a home in Seattle is based on many factors including price, income and savings. Where individuals choose to live is also dependent on more subjective "quality of life" decisions, such as perceived quality of schools, the perception of safety, lot size, and the amount of nearby open space. Some of these factors are monitored elsewhere in this report.

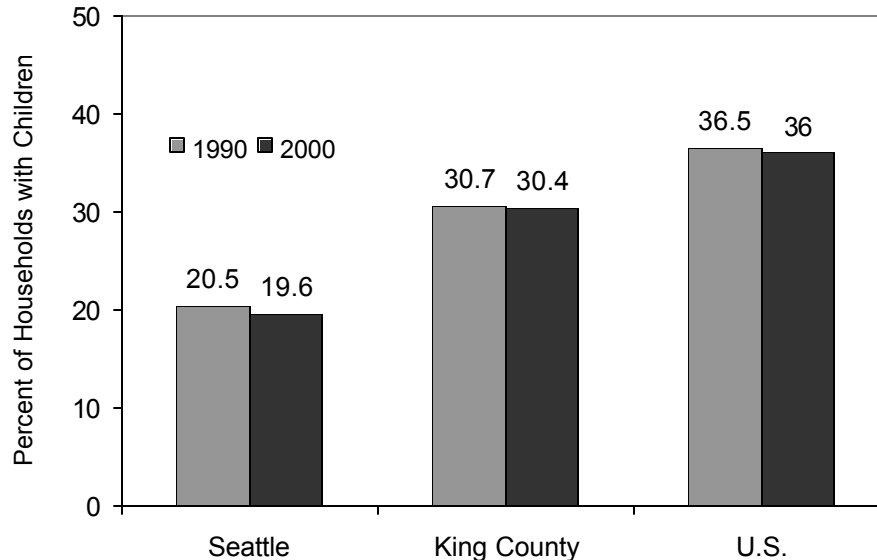
# Home Ownership by Census Block Group



However, the City can affect somewhat the owner occupancy rate through land use policies and funding programs. About two-thirds of the total land area within the city limits is zoned for single-family homes. Because single-family homes are more likely to be owner-occupied, continuing these land use policies can help keep the number of owner-occupied homes relatively stable. In addition, the City has provided funds, and in the current housing levy will continue to provide funds to non-profit organizations for developing affordable housing specifically for owner-occupants.

The Housing Affordability indicator has obvious relevance to the home ownership rate in Seattle. By describing the ratio of the median sales price of a Seattle home to the median income, it suggests whether the average household can afford to own a home.

## Number of households with children: since 1990, the share of households in Seattle with children has declined.



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 1990 Census and Census

The U.S. Census Bureau data measures how many households in Seattle include persons less than 18 years of age. Seattle has had a comparatively low number of households with children for many years. In Snohomish and Pierce counties, the number of households with children is higher than the national average. This may mean that some households with children choose those areas over Seattle because of their comparatively low housing costs.

On the other hand, 40% of all Seattle households contain only one person. This is the fifth highest ratio of one-person households among places in the nation with 100,000 or more residents. It could be that people living alone are more able to afford housing in the city because it is easier for them to pay a larger share of their income for housing in Seattle than families with children. The number of households in Seattle with only one person is double the number of families with children.

We measure the number of households in Seattle with children because children are a vital, and often vulnerable, part of our community. Many elements of the Comprehensive Plan address the importance of children and of planning for their future. The Human Development Element states, “Our children and youth are the most important resources in Seattle’s sustainability. The entire community should share in supporting their growth and development.”

Other Comprehensive Plan policies relevant to making Seattle a community that is friendly to families with children seek to:

- ensure that children can walk or bike to a variety of services in their neighborhood,
- provide different housing types with suitable play areas nearby, and
- ensure that children can have a quality education in Seattle through partnerships with education institutions.